

While Rove continues to hide behind his attorney, a grand jury is investigating the matter. For some strange reason, Republicans claim that Rove has been vindicated. Something tells me that if Rove really believed he was innocent of wrongdoing, we would have already heard from him by now.

□ 1015

The silence from both Rove and the White House is deafening, while the truth continues to be obscured for political gain.

DEMOCRATS SHOULD CARE MORE ABOUT POLICY THAN POLITICS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, last week the minority leader told reporters that "it is essential for us," meaning Democrats, "to take down their numbers," meaning Republicans. And she went on to cite the reasons it is more important to tear down Republicans than offer an actual agenda.

It is obvious from these statements that the Democrat leader's main strategy is obstruction and politics. They care more about partisan spin and negative attacks than ideas and progress.

However, Republican policies are lowering the deficit created by recession and terrorist attacks. Republican policies have spurred the creation of a million jobs this year. Republican policies have allowed the economy to grow faster than any other industrialized country.

And Republican leadership, as opposed to decades of Democrat complacency, have led us into the national discussion on the future of our most important retirement program, Social Security.

The Democratic agenda has lost at the polls. If they cared more about working families than their poll numbers, maybe they would start winning elections again.

GOP SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN CONTINUES THE RAID ON THE SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND

(Mr. CARDOZA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, the authors of the Congressional Republican Social Security privatization plan are not being straight with the American people. The Republicans claim that the plan that they introduced last month includes a lockbox that prevents the use of Social Security funds for other programs. This could not be further from the truth.

Under their privatization plan, Social Security's surplus cash would continue to go to the government, which would continue to spend it. Instead of a Social Security trust fund, account holders get Treasury bonds.

Even the bill's Republican author, the Social Security Subcommittee chairman, has acknowledged that under their bill the cash can still be used in the way it is now.

Over the last 4 years, the Republicans have raided \$670 billion from the Social Security trust fund to help pay for tax breaks. Despite their rhetoric now, the new Republican Social Security privatization scheme proves that they are up to their old tricks.

As we prepare for the 70th anniversary of Social Security next month, the American people deserve a plan that strengthens Social Security for future generations and stops the raid on the Social Security trust fund.

PROBLEMS IN LATIN AMERICA

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, problems now loom in Latin America as they did in the 1980s. Venezuela's Mussolini, Hugo Chavez, ordered 40 Russian military helicopters to station on his border with Colombia. And he is also taking delivery of over 100,000 AK-103 assault rifles to fight a new war.

His war may be in Central America. His agents are already funneling oil money to groups hostile to the United States and to free trade.

We in the Congress have a choice to make. We can either send exports to Central America or troops. Next week let us enact a free trade agreement with Central America to lock in democratic growth and stability, and let us make sure that President Hugo Chavez's Venezuelan agents find no fertile ground in America's back yard.

KARL ROVE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEAKING OF CIA AGENT'S IDENTITY

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, whenever President Bush is asked to comment on Karl Rove's involvement in the leaking of a CIA agent's identity, the President says that he cannot comment because it is an ongoing investigation. However, if the President really wanted to know everything about Karl Rove's involvement, all he would have to do is call Karl Rove into the Oval Office and ask him. Rove's testimony before the grand jury was not private. Rove certainly could have explained his involvement so the President could then determine if Rove can be trusted as a senior national security advisor.

There is simply no reason for President Bush to delay any longer. The American people and our CIA agents around the world need to be able to trust those with top security clearances.

Two years ago, President Bush talked tough about this serious issue

saying, if there is a leak out of my administration, I want to know who it is. Well, President Bush now knows Karl Rove was involved, and yet he says he wants to reserve judgment until after the investigation is completed.

If the President really thought this was serious, he would call Rove into his office and demand an explanation. It is time for President Bush to hold Rove accountable for his actions.

PASS A NATIONAL ENERGY BILL

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, as the conference between the House and Senate on the energy bill gets underway, it is long past due for Congress to pass a comprehensive energy bill. U.S. economic prosperity is closely tied to the availability of a reliable and affordable supply of energy. As the economy grows, so will the demand for energy. According to the Energy Information Agency, the United States, by the year 2025, is expected to need 44 percent more petroleum, 38 percent more natural gas, 43 percent more coal, 54 percent more electricity, and 54 percent more renewable energy.

Record increases in the prices at the pump and in overall energy cost underscore the long-term need to enact a comprehensive national energy strategy. So, Mr. Speaker, the time is now to do so.

SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS BILL

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, we can always use a good laugh around here, but not when it is at the expense of the American people or the future of the Social Security. This is from Congressional Quarterly. It is so bizarre I couldn't make it up. The House version of the Republican Social Security surplus bill uses the Social Security surplus twice. First the government would borrow the surplus from Social Security's trust funds in exchange for special Treasury bonds, as it does now. And it would then direct the surplus back into individual accounts, but then borrow it back again in exchange for bonds that were put into people's private accounts.

The debt on the individual's accounts would appear in the government's budget. The debt to Social Security trust funds would remain off budget, as it is now. The surplus itself would be spent as part of the regular budget.

This is progress in the integrity of Social Security? This is some totally bizarre joke that is so confusing that they are hoping that they can snooker people into voting for it at 3 or 4 or 5 in the morning like they did the Medicare bill, which is now \$800 million over budget and providing precious little

help to our seniors who need prescription drugs. Do not be fooled twice.

AMERICA'S WORKING

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, in spite of all of what the pessimists have said, and regardless of what the mainstream media reports, the economy has greatly improved.

The facts are plain and simple. Our Nation is producing more, and our government is spending less. The estimated Federal budget deficit is \$94 billion less than the earlier prediction, and we have had 14 consecutive quarters of economic growth.

House Republicans have faith in America's ability to grow our economy, and we look to the future with confidence. Our job in Congress is to hold the line on spending. And the unemployment rate has fallen to 5 percent, the lowest since September 2001, with nearly 4 million new jobs created in the last 2 years alone.

Sustained job growth, falling deficits, low interest rates and a booming housing market: America's economy is robust and getting stronger.

With fiscal responsibility and passing pro-growth bills, including the death tax repeal and legal reform, we continue to show our commitment to growing America's economy. But there is still work to do. I am hopeful that Congress will approve the highway and energy bills which will add new jobs to the economy, help improve our roadways, and decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WOMEN

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about Social Security and the millions of American women who rely on it every day.

Women are among one of the largest groups of Social Security beneficiaries who stand to lose a great deal should Social Security be privatized. On average, women live 3 years longer than men. Any contributions to a private account would have to stretch out over more years.

Additionally, the private accounts do not have the guaranteed annual cost-of-living increase in Social Security which would jeopardize the retirement and economic security of older women through the gamble of the stock market.

Social Security is a good deal for women because it gives people with lower earnings a greater return on what they paid in, and women on average have lower incomes and less time in the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time we quit talking about privatizing Social Security

and instead come up with ways to strengthen it.

CENTRAL AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

(Mr. PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. The Central American Free Trade Agreement. We use this acronym frequently, CAFTA. It is Central America, our brothers and sisters and the future of the world when it comes to the corridor for an economic base that is unlimited into South America and Central America.

Exports to Central America from my home State of Nevada grew 56 percent from 2000 to 2004, far higher than the 16 percent average increase. In 2003 alone, Nevada experienced an 88 percent increase with significant gains in machinery, computer and electronic manufacturing.

Manufactured goods accounted for 69 percent of Nevada's exports to Central America. Not only will the passage of CAFTA immediately eliminate tariffs on 80 percent of exports on Nevada's manufacturers; it will also abolish all remaining tariffs within 10 years, including the tariff on chemicals, electronic equipment, machinery, and transportation equipment.

Mr. Speaker, Central American Free Trade Agreement, the future economic base of the world is Central and South America.

DEMOCRACY DEPENDS ON FREE SPEECH AND DISSENT

(Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I heard the remarks of the majority leader a few minutes ago. Democracy depends on free speech and dissent. Free speech is stifled when dissent is labeled treason or is derided in time of war as not supporting our troops.

We all support our troops. One can point out the mistakes or the dishonesty of the administration while not stinting in supporting our troops. Pointing out that the administration misled the country about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is not "not supporting our troops."

Pointing out that Karl Rove appears to have participated in a conspiracy to punish Ambassador Wilson for telling the truth about this by revealing the Ambassador's wife's CIA role is not "not supporting our troops."

Pointing out the administration's justification for keeping our troops in harm's way in Iraq flip-flops by the season is not "not supporting our troops."

Demanding proper investigation of evidence that the administration has

disgraced this country by evading our laws against torturing prisoners is not "not supporting our troops."

A free society requires that all these accusations see the light of day. Let the administration rebut them if they can. But do not use the mantra of supporting our troops to stifle essential free speech.

STATE DEFENSE FORCES

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as the global war on terrorism continues, State Defense Forces are playing an increasingly critical role in ensuring that their communities are prepared for Homeland Security crises and recovery from hurricane damage.

As a 31-year veteran of the South Carolina Army National Guard, I am well aware of the valuable contributions of the South Carolina State Guard. From training monthly to supporting National Guard operations, these capable men and women honorably offer their time and experience for their communities.

To ensure that these volunteers are used to their greatest potential, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS) and I have reintroduced the State Defense Forces Improvement Act. This legislation will recognize the importance of the State Defense Forces, authorize DOD and DHS to coordinate Homeland Security efforts with and provide training to State Defense Forces and allow State Defense Forces to receive surplus DOD equipment.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

□ 1030

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN IRAQ

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today's New York Times states that a London-based group of academics and researchers has released a report on civilian casualties in Iraq for the first 2 years of the war. The report, based on analysis of civilian casualties reported in the news media, states that 24,865 civilians were killed and about 42,500 wounded.

The report goes on to list its findings specifically. We also know that there is another study which was published in October of 2004 in the Lancet, the British medical journal, according to the New York Times, that says that some of the estimates of Iraqi civilian deaths range as high as 100,000.

I have stood on this floor many times and bemoaned the loss of our American troops, but I think in the name of humanity we have to start thinking